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AMATSUKI

by TAKAYAMA Shinobu

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18
高山しのぶ
SHINOBU TAKAYAMA

第十八巻
高山しのぶ

Volume 18
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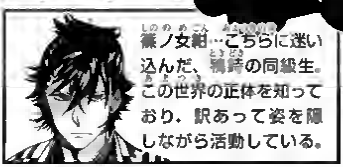
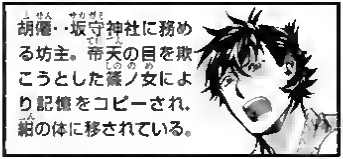
Amatsuki
18
Shinobu Takayama

人物紹介

六合鵺時…柔軟な性格の高校生。帝天の定めた運命「天網」を書き換える力を持つ「白紙の者」でもある。銀朱の記憶を有し、この世界の成り立ちを知った。



篠ノ女紺…こちらに迷い込んだ、鵺時の同級生。この世界の正体を知っており、訳あって姿を隠しながら活動している。



胡儘…坂守神社に務める坊主。帝天の目を欺こうとした篠ノ女により記憶をコピーされ、紺の体に移されている。

真朱…坂守神社の主で、先見の力を持つ巫女。この世界を破壊するほどの強大な力を持つ。

琉々…半が刑事時代に逮捕した漆原の娘。半が引き取り養育中。父親に人体実験を施されていた。

空五倍子…梵天によって作られた妖。仮面が剥れ、彼岸での鵺時の知り合い・半の記憶を取り戻す。

雲亭…梵天と共に白緑に育てられた拗妖。白緑を殺した人間を憎んでいるが、鵺時だけは信頼している。

あらすじ

最先端のCG技術で江戸の町を再現した大江戸幕末巡回展。そこを訪れた鵺時は、妖夜行と鵺に襲われ、幕末の江戸に良く似た異世界に迷い込んでしまった。

白紙の者の力故に、帝天と戦う妖と人の双方から助力を求められた鵺時は、どちらも選ばなかった。その結果、独力で帝天に挑んだ銀朱は存在を造り換えられ、今までの記憶を書き換えられてしまう。

憤った鵺時は、帝天に対抗すべく、人(神社・除陽寮)と妖(梵天ら天座)を結び付ける。しかしその矢先、朽葉、真朱、『本当の銀朱の体』が夜行にさらわれてしまう。

そんな折、鵺時達は江戸城に乗り込む。そこで夜行達妖の轟討を打破する中、空五倍子、雲亭、煤竹、将軍・家茂が彼岸の人間だということが判明する。

一方、本物の篠ノ女紺から、コピーであること、元は胡儘だということを知り、鵺時達には正体を隠して同行していた紺だったが、ついに正体を明かした。

江戸城攻略の要、上野に辿り着いた鵺時は、紺の助言により白紙の力で約束を救い出す。

そして、弁天堂本殿に向かった鵺時と空五倍子の前に真朱の姿が。だが、突然襲ってきて…!?

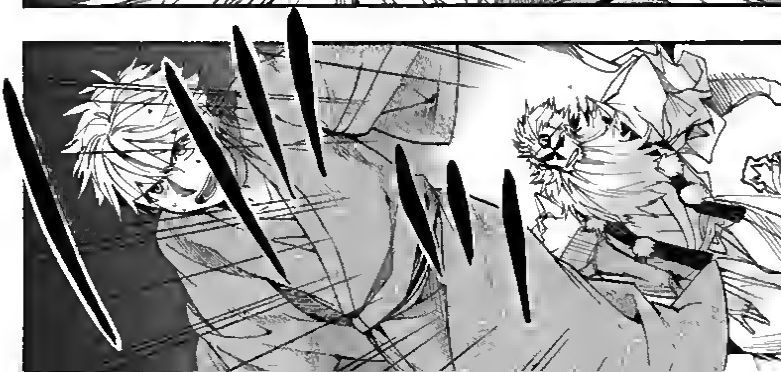
NIGHT 109
A CUCKOO, SINGING TO THE MOON
PART 12

WATCH OUT, HASHITA-SAN!
EH?
AA...

YOU MONSTER!!
DIE!!
WHA...?
KIRI...
KIRI!!

ドゴ
ドス

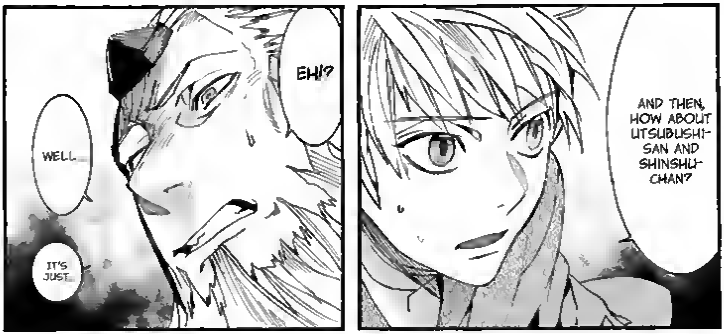
KU-

TOKI!?
STAND UP HASHITA-SAN.


DON'T LET THEM GO!!
WHAT?
DAMN.

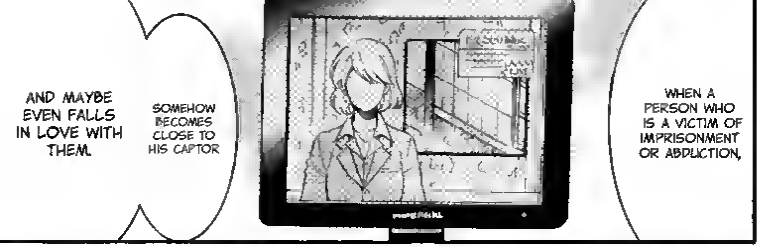
HIDE HERE HASHITA-SAN
WAIT A MINUTE-! I THOUGHT SHINSHU HAD RIRI'S MIND.
BUT DON'T YOU REMEMBER?
SUSUTAKE-SAN AND AINEZU-SAN.
WON'T IT ALL BE OVER IF WE RESCUE HER!?
YEAH THAT'S TRUE
...NOT ONLY HAVE TIES TO HIGAN,
BUT TIES TO AMATSUKI TOO.

COME TO THINK OF IT...
YOU COULD SAY I'M ACQUAINTED WITH SUGUTAKE TOO
I MEAN WITH WAKASA, WE'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME
like hanging out...

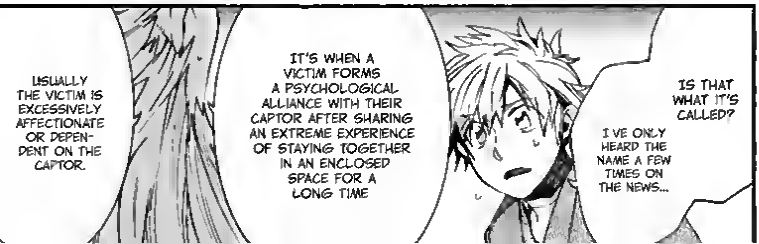

AND THEN, HOW ABOUT UTSUBUSHI-SAN AND SHINSHU-CHAN?
EH!?
WELL...
IT'S JUST...

ONE TIME...
SHE THREW A STONE AT ME AND CHASED ME OUT...
MAYBE I WASN'T AS CLOSE TO RIRI AS I THOUGHT...
NO, I DON'T THINK THAT'S THE CASE.

HE'S THE MANIFESTATION OF THE GUARDIAN SHE WISHED FOR,
AND SHE DEPENDED HEAVILY ON GINSHU-SAN.
BUT WHY WAS THAT?
WHEN,
SHINSHU-CHAN DID ANY-THING, IT WAS ALWAYS FOR AYAME-SAN
OF ALL OF HIS PREDECESSORS, HE WAS THE KINDEST TO HER
JUST WHY...
DID SHE HAVE SUCH A DEEP ATTACHMENT TO GINSHU-SAN.
HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THIS,
HASHITA SAN?
!
WAS IT REALLY JUST BECAUSE HE LOOKED LIKE HER FATHER?
EVEN AFTER BEING SAVED AND LIVING WITH YOU, DO YOU REALLY THINK THE BOND OF BLOOD IS THAT MUCH STRONGER?
RATHER THAN THAT...

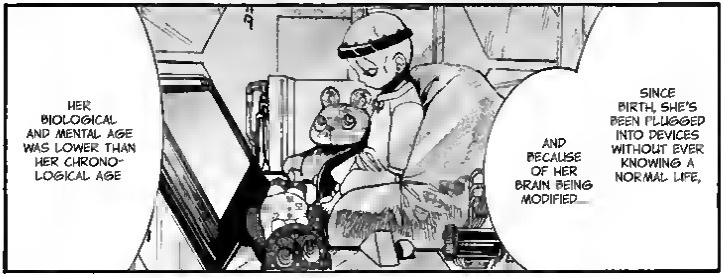

WHEN A PERSON WHO IS A VICTIM OF IMPRISONMENT OR ABDUCTION,
SOMEHOW BECOMES CLOSE TO HIS CAPTOR
AND MAYBE EVEN FALLS IN LOVE WITH THEM.

STOCKHOLM SYNDROME!?


IS THAT WHAT IT'S CALLED?
I'VE ONLY HEARD THE NAME A FEW TIMES ON THE NEWS...
IT'S WHEN A VICTIM FORMS A PSYCHOLOGICAL ALLIANCE WITH THEIR CAPTOR AFTER SHARING AN EXTREME EXPERIENCE OF STAYING TOGETHER IN AN ENCLOSED SPACE FOR A LONG TIME
USUALLY THE VICTIM IS EXCESSIVELY AFFECTIONATE OR DEPENDENT ON THE CAPTOR.

WHILST INVESTIGATING, DETECTIVES SOMETIMES COME ACROSS THIS TERM.
IN SUCH CASES, MOST OF THE TIME, THE HOSTAGE WILL SHOW HOSTILITY TO THE POLICE...
WAIT !!
I GOT IT..!!
Nod
FOR SHINSHU-CHAN, WE'RE NOTHING BUT AN ENEMY TO HER IDEALLY ENVISIONED FATHER...
..AND TO HER WE ARE THE OPPONENT WHO NEEDS TO BE DEFEATED.

IF SO, SHE DIDN'T EVEN NEED ANYONE'S HELP...!!
BUT THAT WAS AFTER THE INCIDENT SO I DIDN'T PAY MUCH ATTENTION!
I SEE..!! RIRI HAD A MEDICAL CHECKUP,


HER BIOLOGICAL AND MENTAL AGE WAS LOWER THAN HER CHRONOLOGICAL AGE
AND BECAUSE OF HER BRAIN BEING MODIFIED...
SINCE BIRTH, SHE'S BEEN PLUGGED INTO DEVICES WITHOUT EVER KNOWING A NORMAL LIFE,

NOT EXACTLY, HASHITA-SAN.
I THINK HER TRUE CHARACTER IS MORE MATURE AND SMART
NO.
SHE COULDN'T TELL THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GOOD AND BAD, OR EVEN SENSIBLE THINGS, THAT'S WHY...

I GUESS WHAT I SAW FOR JUST A FEW SECONDS WAS HER REAL CHARACTER.
IF I'M REMEMBERING IT RIGHT,
COME TO THINK OF IT,
WHAT?

BUT WHEN I LOOKED AT HER WITH MY BARE EYES
SHE LOOKED...
AT THAT TIME I HAD NO KNOWLEDGE OR PREJUDICE
MORE GROWN UP.

THE TRUE SELF...
AND ORIGINAL PERSONALITY OF RIRI.
IF THAT WAS A FRAGMENT OF HER MIND EXISTING ONLY IN HER SUB-CONSCIOUS...
THEN IT'S ALL THANKS TO YOU THAT
THAT PART WAS ABLE TO BLOSSOM.

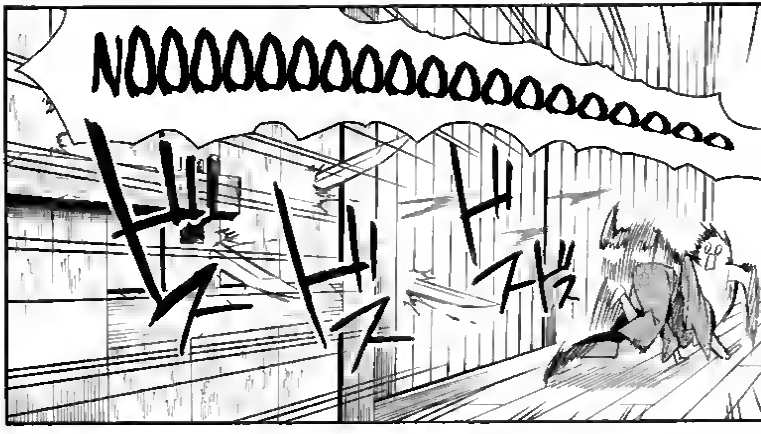
THE SOLE PERSON SHE DEPENDED HEAVILY ON
BECAME CORRUPTED BECAUSE OF HER...
...AND THEN I CAME BEFORE HER AND THE MASK SLIPPED
AND NOT BEING ABLE TO DO ANYTHING SHE REGRESSED INTO A SMALLER AND SMALLER STATE
WITH A FACT LIKE THAT CONSTANTLY REPLAYING IN HER MIND
JUST TO MAINTAIN THAT PART OF HERSELF

BUT I THINK THAT THE MATURE SHINSHU-CHAN STILL EXISTS SOMEWHERE.
IF THAT'S SO, THAT WOULD BE THE REAL RIRI-CHAN

THE CHILDISH SHINSHU-CHAN CORRODED AWAY HER TRUE HEART...

OR INSIDE OF THE BENTEN-DOU..

BUT HOW DO WE FIND HER?
MAYBE SOMEWHERE CLOSER TO HIGAN...
WELL SHE'S DEFINITELY NOT HERE.

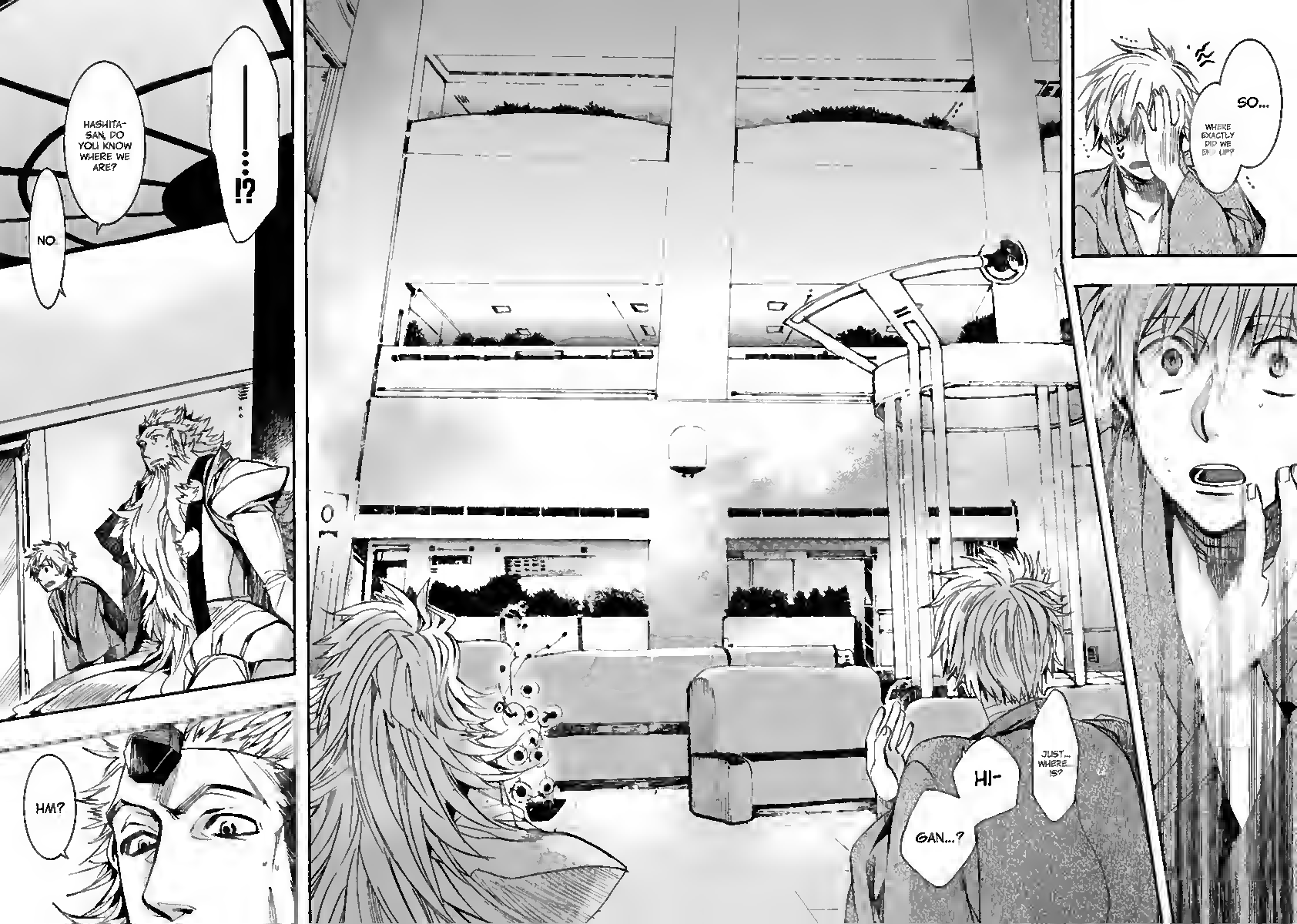

NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO
ドドド

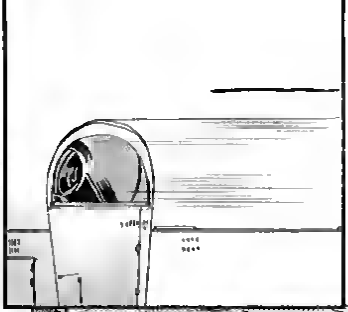
EXACTLY HOW DO WE DO THAT!?
THE NUE ARE WAITING FOR US OUTSIDE!!
DON'T WORRY!!
START PRAYING HASHITA SAN.
FOR WHAT?
THAT I'M THE ONE
WHO IS THE STRONGEST
WHEN IT COUNTS THE MOST!!

HERE WE GO!!
THE ANYWHERE DOOR-
YEE EES!!

FW
AAAAA

HEY-
TELL ME WHERE ARE WE GOING!?
I DON'T KNOO OOW!!
ガーン
!?
H-
HEY
TOKI?
YEAH?
I DON'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT THIS RIGHT NOW. BUT IF YOU OPEN A HOLE WITHOUT ENVISIONING A DESTINATION
WOULDN'T YOU JUST FALL FOREVER WITHOUT GOING ANYWHERE?


SO...
WHERE EXACTLY DID WE END UP?
JUST... WHERE IS?
HI-
GAN...?
!?
HASHITA-SAN, DO YOU KNOW WHERE WE ARE?
NO.
HM?



!
THAT THING...

THIS PLACE.
IS IT... SHINBASHI HOSPI...
...TAL!?

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